

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 00245 052047Z

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AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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TAGS PFOR US UR

SUBJECT: RAYMOND ARON ON DETNTE

1. AS PART OF YEAR-END REVIEW, RAYMOND ARON ANALYZES
DETENTE IN JANUARY 3 ISSUE OF PARIS DAILY LE FIGARO.
HIGHLIGHTS OF ARTICLE FOLLOW:

2. MAJOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL QUESTION AT BEGINNING
OF 1976 CONCERNS STATE OF DETENTE. IS IT IN DANGER ?
QUESTION ITSELF IS ALMOT IRRELEVANT BECAUSE MANY OF
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PAGE 02 PARIS 00245 052047Z

ELEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO DETENTE WERE NEVER REALLY PART OF

THE CONCEPT. EVEN IN BEST DAYS OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS DURING 1972 AND 1973, NEVER DID ANY INTERPRETATION OF DETENTE SIGNIFY RECONCILIATION OF IDEOLOGIES OR A DEFINITIVE PEACE BETWEEN THE CAPITALIST AND SOCIALIST WORLDS. IN FACT, IF ONE ANALYZES SEPARATE COMPORTMENTS OF USA AND SOVIET UNION DURING PAST FEW YEARS, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW DIFFERENT THEY WOULD HAVE ACTED IF THERE WERE NO DETENTE. DECISIONS TAKEN BY BOTH SUPER POWERS UNDER PRESSURE IN VIETNAM (HAIPHONG MINING, FINAL COUP DE GRACE WITH SOVIET ARMS), AND IN MIDDLE EAST DURING KIPPOUR WAR ILLUSTRATE THIS THESIS. IF DETENTE DOES NOT MATTER THAT MUCH, WHAT ABOUT AMERICAN WHEAT SALES OR WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMERCIALCREDITS TO THE SOVIETS. WHY ARE THESE CONCESSIONS MADE TO THE SOVIETS? THE AMERICANS NEED TO SELL THEIR WHEAT TO KEEP THE FARMERS HAPPY. THE EUROPEANS NEED TO SELL THEIR PRODUCTS. AND TECHNOLOGY BECAUSE OF THEIR HEAVY BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICITS. IF THIS INTERPLAY OF MUTUAL INTERESTS IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE, AGAIN IT IS ALMOST USELESS TO SAY DETENTE IS IN DANGER.

3.THERE ARE TWO ELEMENTS WHICH ARE VALID WHEN ANALYSTS SPEAK OF DANGER TO DETENTE...SALT AND THE SUCCESSION TO BREZHNEV. IN BOTH CASES, IT DOES NOT LOOK AS IF DETENTE IS IN TROUBLE. THE VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT IS IN TROUBLE FOR TWO SPECIFIC REASONS, THE CRUISE MISSILE AND THE BACKFIRE BOMBER. BUT BOTH SIDES WANT SALT II BADLY ENOUGH TO MAKE IT LIKELY THAT AN AGREEMENT WILL BE REACHED BY SPRING. THE AMERICANS WANT AN AGREEMENT BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT NEEDS A BOOST FOR HIS ELECTORAL CHANCES. THE SOVIETS WANT AN AGREEMENT BECAUSE IT WOULD SIGNIFY A FURTHER STEP ON THE ROAD TO STRATEGIC EQUALITY WHICH COULD THEN BE TRANSFORMED INTO EVENTUAL SUPERIORITY ASSUMING THE CONCEPT OF SUPERIORITY MAKES ANY SENSE.

4. THE SECOND ELEMENT IS THE ARGUMENT THAT DETENTE IS IN DANGER BECAUSE OF THE BREZHNEV SUCCESSION PHENOMENON. THE HAWKS AND THE DOVES IN THE KREMLIN ARE FIGHTING FOR SUPREMACY, AND DETENTE IS FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE. THIS TOO IS NOT ACCURATE. BREZHNEV NEVER HAD MONOPOLY OVER UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 PARIS 00245 052047Z

POWER. IT HAS BEEN A COLLEGIAL SITUATION WHICH IS NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE AFTER BREZHNEV DEPARTS.

5. IN SUMMATION, ARON IS SAYING THAT DETENTE IS JUST A CODE WORD FOR THE SUPER POWERS INDULGING THEIR MUTUAL INTERESTS WHILE THEY CONTINUE THEIR PLANETARY MANEUVERING. IN THIS CONTEXT, DETENTE IS NEITHER IN DANGER NOR A PANACEA. IT WILL THEREFORE CONTINUE.

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